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New Jersey Law Journal

UNSUNG HEROES AWARD WINNER:

MARISSA HARRINGTON, IMS LEGAL STRATEGIES



Marissa Harrington, with IMS Legal Strategies.

The New Jersey Law Journal is recognizing Marissa Harrington of IMS Legal Strategies as an Unsung Heroes Award Winner. Read a Q&A with her below.

Law practice is often a team endeavor. What has been your experience with teamwork in the law?

Collaboration in the litigation consulting industry is essential—both internally and externally. At IMS, trial consultants, which I was for the majority of my career, work closely with our graphic designers to execute on the strategic vision for the demonstratives used for various settings in the litigation lifecycle. These same consultants also work closely with the legal team to ensure the demonstratives support the person utilizing them (e.g. expert or attorney). The iterative process between the consultant and the designer and the consultant and the expert(s) or attorney(s) heavily relies on clear communication, good partnering, and a can-do attitude. When we become key members of the trial team, working in tandem with attorneys and experts, simply put, this is when the magic happens in the courtroom and the job is the most fulfilling.

What types of work done at law firms and other organizations are commonly underappreciated?

The work that decides a lot of cases happens where nobody's looking. Trial graphics and visual advocacy, jury consulting,

expert witness sourcing, document review, case strategy research, courtroom logistics: none of it shows up in a case summary or a headline, even though it often determines whether a jury actually understands the argument in front of them. Paralegals and legal support staff carry the same weight: the administrative backbone of a case runs through them, and their names rarely appear anywhere. Ironically, the better this work is done, the less visible it becomes; a graphic that helps a juror "get it" is often doing its job behind the scenes.

What can law firms and other organizations do to provide more opportunities for advancement?

The two most important components needed for advancement opportunities are clear career guidelines and good managers. Clear guidelines surrounding career advancement opportunities are critical in any organization to help both managers and team members understand the benchmarks and expectations associated with moving up within the company. Throughout the year, it is a manager's job to work with each direct report to understand their career goals and plot the path to get them where they would like to go. Both manager and direct report can use the company guidelines to lay out where employees are and what they need to do to advance to the next level. It is essential that managers then provide them with the opportunities to achieve their goals, and that companies stand by their guidelines and promote employees when they perform in accordance with them. It is this level of transparency and advocacy that keeps employees engaged and staying with a company for the life of their career.

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